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AUTHOR Mutanyatta, J. N. S.
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ABSTRACT

Despite their significant role in African economies, women are still the victims of poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, and powerlessness. Most African countries are classified as "low" on the Human Development Index and exhibit a relationship between per capita gross domestic product and the adult literacy rate. Rural women appear to be the most disadvantaged group and are the least represented in political decision making. Factors accounting for gender inequalities include cultural attitudes toward women, colonialism, low levels of functional literacy, discrimination in employment, and lack of training and education. Development projects focusing on women have met with little success in the past, largely due to problems with participation. Educational systems should be planned to integrate women in overall national development plans and strategies. Educational activities should foster emancipation and empowerment for rural women and should involve work-oriented, functional adult literacy activities in areas of agriculture, livestock, and business enterprises. Other important educational needs are legal rights education, vocational education, and various nonformal education programs. National educational policies and priorities for rural women should focus on equal access and opportunities in national development. (KS)

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SOUTHERN AFRICAN COMPARATIVE AND HISTORY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

Education for the 21st Century in Southern Africa
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EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PRIORITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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DR. J.N.S. MUTANYATTA

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EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PRIORITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN IN SOUTHERN AFRICA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

1. Introduction

Southern Africa, like in most countries in the African continent, is predominantly rural where the majority of people especially women live and work for their livelihood. The focus of the paper is on rural women, including female headed households. Despite their significant role in national economy, women are still the victims of object poverty, illiteracy, discrimination in all spheres of influence, and powerlessness. The social repercussions of these inherent problems facing rural women are enormous. For example, discrimination is a social evil and thus discriminatory practices against women leads to real wastage by society of the energy, capabilities and intelligence of women. Other social repercussions include women's psychological feeling of frustration and discouragement, thereby impairing equality of opportunities and treatment. While we acknowledge the feminist movement for the last three decades, its impact has not as yet reached the rural women. The beneficials are the elite women and to some extend urban dwellers.

For the 21st century society needs to recognise the fundamental human rights of women and the girl-child as inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. This calls for the full and equal participation of women in the economic, social, civil, political and cultural life of the nation at all levels. To achieve women's liberation and empowerment, the paper stresses the need for the right education for women. This calls for re-examination and re-formulation of appropriate and priority policies for women in development, and especially in the field of education. Relevant educational activities and an operational research agenda are proposed in order to achieve

concrete actions which are gender-based for sustainable ecodevelopment.

The Debate

Thus, the paper presents a challenging debate on a number of issues - a situation analysis - related to the roles and conditions of rural women, in particular. First we look at a profile of human development on selected indicators as indicated in Table 1 for purpose of comparative analysis and the emerging state of affair on gender. Second we briefly outline the development patterns that seem inherent in the perpetuation of today's inequalities, third, an overview on perspectives on women in development is made to reveal salient misconceptions and stereotypes, and finally we highlight the needed educational policies and priorities for rural women in Southern Africa for the 21st Century. We shall briefly discuss each of these issues hereunder.

2.1 A Profile for Human Development: A Comparative Analysis

Table 1 indicate several indicators for comparative analysis between the developed and the developing counties of Southern Africa. Out of the total 173 countries of the world, 53 countries are ranked under the "High Human Development Index" and no African country is included under this category. The next category is "Medium Human Development Index" rank, ranging from number 54 to 118. In this category only seven African counties are included. With HDI rank in blanket, these are Mauritius (60), Tunisia (81), Botswana (87), South Africa (93) Egypt (110), Morocco (111) and Swaziland (117). The third HDI rank "Low Human Development Index, and all the rest of African counties are included here. The last on LHDI rank is Guinea (173). For the countries of Southern Africa, as indicated in Table 1 range from 120th rank (Lesotho) to 159th (mozambique).

Furthermore, data reveal interesting inferences. These include:

TABLE 1 PROFILE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS COMPARATIVE DATA BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIECSOF SOUTHERN AFRICA

	Human Development Index Rank Order by countries	Real GDP Per Capita USA $ 1992	Human Development Index	Estimate popular tion in millions 1992	Human distress un-employment rate %	Human deprivation Poverty 1992 Total $ trillion	Rural % of total	Rural-Urban Gap Rural Population as % of total	Illiterate Adults 15+ Years 1992 Millions	Illiterate Females 15+ Years 1992 Millions	Adult literacy rate % 1992 Total	Female	Male	Female as % of population 1992	Parliament of seats occupied by women 1992	% of labour force in Agric. 1986
A Rank	High Human Development Index															
1	Canada	19,320	0.932	27.4	11.2						99.0				13	
2	Switerland	21,760	0.931	6.8	2.5						99.0				16	
3	Japan	19,300	0.929	123.5	2.2						99.0				6	
4	Sweden	17,490	0.928	8.6	4.8						99.0				33	
8	USA	22,130	0.925	255.2	7.3						99.0				10	
10	UK	16,339	0.918	57.7	9.9						99.0				9	
31	Russian Federation	6,930	0.858	149.0	0.8						98.7				9	
51	Kuwait	13,126	0.909	1.9*							73.9				0	
B	Medium Human Development															
87	Botswana	1,670	0.672	1.3		0.6	0.5	73			75	66	85	109	5	70
93	South Africa	3,885	0.650	39.9				50								
117	Swaziland	2,506	0.513	0.8			0.3	72						103	19	
C	Low Human Development															
120	Lesotho	1,500	0.476	0.2		1.0	0.8	70							2	86
121	Zimbabwe	2,160	0.474	10.6			0.1	70			69	61	76	102	12	73
127		2,381	0.425	1.5				71							7	
138	Namibia	1,010	0.352	8.6		5.5	4.0	58	1.1		75	67	83	103	7	73
148	Zambia	570	0.306	27.9		16.2	13.1	78						102	11	86
155	Tanzania	1,000	0.271	9.9			4.7	73	2.8		43	29	57	103	10	
157	Angola	893	0.260	10.3			8.2	68		0.7	73			103	12	83
159	Malawi	921	0.252	15.1		8.4	6.9	70	5.3		34	21	46	103	16	85
	Mozambique					8.9				1.8						
										3.2						

Source: UNDP (1994) Human Development Report. No figures readily available

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- While developed countries experience human distress due to unemployment cushioned by welfare programmes and social security the developing world live under absolute poverty, and women are the most affected.

- Hence women experience insecurity arising from worries about daily life - in rural areas the situation worsens with lack of security of jobs, income, health, food etc.

- The developed countries e.g. Canada ranking number one on HDI, has about 5-times real GDP per capita than Botswana which is ranked No. 87 and categorized under medium Human Development Index, Canada has slightly more than 20-times real GDP per capita than Mozambique. Hence the recognition of a very wide gap between rich and poor countries - a concern for human inequality, distress and absolute poverty in poor nations.

- There is apparent relationship between real GDP per capita and the adult literature rate. The higher the real GDP per capita the higher the adult literacy rate, and the lower the GDP per capita the lower the adult literacy rate. This relationship correlates positively with other indicators such as human deprivation in terms of people in absolute poverty with the overwhelming majority being in rural area. For example, the least underdeveloped, Mozambique with a population of 15.1 million people, more than half of its people (8.9 million) live under absolute poverty, of which the overwhelming majority, (6.9 million or 77.6%) live in rural areas. In addition among its 5.3 million illiterate adults 15 years and above, the majority 3.2 or 61.5%) are females. To be noted with concern is that people of Mozambique have suffered a lot from civil wars, and among refugees, women and children have been the most displaced.

- Another observation to be made is that there exist greater disparities in terms of rural-urban gaps with the countries of

Southern Africa being characterized by having the majority of people in rural areas for example 70% for Mozambique, 88% Malawi; and corresponding with higher percentages of the labour force in agriculture. And with the apparent phenomenon of female-male gaps: female as percentage of population far exceed males in all states - with the range of 102 to 109. This disparity has implication on the status and role of women in these countries of Southern Africa. Their numerical force directly relate to:

- Higher percentages in human deprivation living in absolute poverty than men,

- Are found in greater numbers in rural areas with greater percentages in arable agriculture and much more illiterate etc.

- Nonetheless, despite women numerical force, they are thinly represented in parliament almost in all countries of the world (less than one third). This has repercussion in political decision-making.

The above comparative analysis sheds light on the next issue on factors of gender inequalities in today's development patterns.

2.2 Development Patterns that Perpetuate

Todays Inequalities: Women Being the most Disadvantaged

A number of interrelated issues account for the perpetuation of gender inequalities: These include (the list is endless) (although each country has situation specific factors):

- Cultural attitudes: indigenous education and sex roles, women have had fewer opportunities to improve their position;

- Colonialism with its accompanied evils of capitalism e.g. consumerism, cash-economy, with its attendant profit motives namely the human capital approach - with obvious dangers of slave labour, exploitation of workers etc. perpetuates social inequalities.

- Labour migration, men in town in search of jobs leaving women alone in the rural areas - as household - leads to social disintegration.

- Institutional policy of IMF - World Bank structural Adjustment conditionalities - in favour of cash crops rather than food crops - leading to development with the human face.

- Dependency on the "hoe" in arable agriculture, due to insufficient or lack of appropriate technology to enable women to increase productivity.

- Limited access to drought power (Most women do not own cattle) land, markets and credit scheme.

- Low levels of functional literacy and lack of appropriate training undermine and inhibit women's ability to contribute meaningfully to agricultural production.

- Discrimination in employment, especially married women with children. Exclusion in air hostesses or bank cashiers, mines etc.

- The principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value is not yet universally applied.

- Lack of equality of opportunities - many parents and consequently many girls, still see marriage as a means for women to make a living, which does not correspond any more to reality - in the 21st

century, e.g. in certain social classes, unfortunately, women are still assumed to be the property of their husbands.

- In terms of business women lack of entrepreneurial skills and a business culture training - hence experience low level of production and low quality of products, and stiff competition from mass produced goods in modern factories. Here we underline the need for technical education priority for women.

- In education, women experience psychological frustrations, they drop-out, due to poor performance, irrelevant curricula and pregnancy.

- Few girls do science related subjects and in most instances, biassed educational materials entrench gender based discrimination etc.

- Disparities between rural and urban areas as regards to access to education, health, water etc.

- Rural women lack timely and adequate information dissemination in all spheres of influence - legal, education, health, economic and political arenas.

- Rural women are poor of the poor; and many live under obsolute poverty.

- Discrimination in law especially married women in property. The law plays a significant role in the marginalization of women not only in their personal capacity but also in their capacity in relation to the political and socio-economic aspects of civic society such as education, employment, agriculture etc.

These discriminatory practices in turn lead to misconceptions and stereotypes on women in development as analyzed below.

2.3 An Overview on Perspectives on Women in Development

Both Government and NGOs for a long time they have tried to target development projects for women, so that they can learn new skills etc in order to improve their productivity and thereby free themselves from poverty. The results, in most cases, have been frustrating. No success of a measurable magnitude has been recorded. Here in Botswana WID projects have been a nullity, leaving women poorer and more psychologically frustrated and in despair. In short, experience has shown that designing programs to integrate women in development is a tremendous complex task. For one thing, integration has meant different things to different people. The first misconception has been the concept of participatory approaches. This means that not only projects should be targeted to women, but also women must participate in planning, implementing and evaluating projects. However, we must recognize that participation does not come automatically, but must be consciously planned for. Furthermore, we must recognize that there is an important conceptual distinction between participatory learning and educational programmes to foster participation in the developing process.

Thus, we need to reflect on the issue of whether the learning process is inherently participatory or whether it is that which is learned that enable women to participate in development. However, no matter how participatory learning and education for participation may be distinct, they may be one and the same, but most often, they are interactive. Our foremost concern here is to examine the operational definition of the concept "participation" and how it suits women involvements in projects.

Participation imply "the act of taking part" and therefore mean "involvement of the people in decision-making about economic, political and social activities of the community at all levels - community, district, national and international" While the issue of participation is

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encouraged for obvious reasons - such as increased sense of ownership and collective responsibility etc. There is ample evidence to show that rural women exhibit low participation because of inherent discriminatory practices in the socio-economic and political structures e.g. cultural. colonial and bureaucratic red tape. We shall not dwell on this any further.

The second misconception lies in traditional cultural sex roles and conservative attitudes. Women's attitudes towards cultural sex role may see no need for change. And because of socially ascribed roles, we continue to have fewer opportunities to improve their lives and position.

The third issue relates to attitudes of change agents. Some content that women's programmes or projects should be on strengthening family household units. This perspective, so misconceived, leads to programmes oriented and limited to and within the family. Others advocate programmes for women to meet basic human needs, mainly because about two-thirds of the world's illiterate are women. Other programmes are linked with women's liberation and empowerment etc. These and other differing perspectives or conceptual orientation complicate and inhibit articulation of meaningful and appropriate selection, planning and implementation of WID projects.

Nevertheless, there is recognition that women continue to play significant roles in national development, and that women in a changing scientific and technological world, are seeking wage employment and equality of opportunities in all spheres of influence. Thus, the education of women need to be translated into concrete reality of their needs, aspirations and equality of life. Such needs have profound impact on the right education for women and in particular in the reformulation and legalizing appropriate educational policies and priorities for rural women in our sub-continent. Hereunder we outline these policies and priorities.

2.4 Educational Policies and Priorities for Rural Women

The focus is on the need for democratization of education, that is free and permanent dialogue and participation within the educational process. The perspective of the "right education" is conceptualized in the very essence of authentic human and development of "not only to teach people how to eat fish, but precisely how to fish" Hence the right education for women must be work-oriented in situation specific. We recognize that women are a diverse group between and within counties. Education for participation should be analyzed at least in five stages of awareness, decision-making, implementation, benefits (utility) and evaluation. Also we recognize the very fact that women play significant roles in nation building. Thus, any education system should be planned to integrate women in the overall national development plans and strategies. Therefore educational policies and priorities should allow infinite diversity of women individualities, temperaments, aspirations and vocations. Equality in education of necessity requires personalized pedagogy enshrined in the fundamental freedoms of individuals.

The driving force is not only to develop the person to become aware of his freedom, rights and responsibilities, but also and more important to acquire the maximum amount of knowledge, skills and the right attitudes (innovative ones). In essence we recognize that knowledge cannot be simply imparted by someone who considers that he knows to those who consider they do not know-knowledge for adaptation is built up through relationships between man and the universe, relationships shot through with change, and critical problem-solving within. These relationships continues its development, for long term sustainability.

What then are the right educational activities for emancipation, liberation and empowerment of rural women? The answer lies in the concrete reality of the roles and status of women in the rural sector and as development goals vary; within and between nations, due to variation on ideologies, so will vary the educational policies and

priorities. Therefore design of educational activities should be situation specific in time and space-shaped among others by prevailing cultures within the ever changing science and technological advancement. Again, the focus is on the conditions, roles and status of rural women. From this perspective, we have already analyzed the issues of object-poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, and non-representation in political decision-making process, just to name a few. Needed educational activities targeted to rural women, naturally starts with the need to institutionalize the:

- eradication of illiteracy, then,

- the deliberate provision of work-oriented or functional adult literacy, tailored in line with women economic activities either in arable-agriculture, livestock, business enterprises etc. Hence the provision of "Basic Education" for all as advocated by UNDP, UNESCO etc in Thailand, 1990. The essence is on life-skills training.

- Legal rights education

- Vocational education; and

- All relevant variants of non-formal education including:

    - Counselling programmes
    - Extension education or outreach
    - Civic education etc.

Noted too is the consideration of factors for designing effective educational activities for rural women. Crucial design factors include issues of motivation both from the sociological and psychological orientations; awareness of rewards and benefits entailed in programmes targeted for women, expectations of the clientele and, their abilities in relation to the planned learning experiences. Thus, role acceptance and

recognition, lead to psychological mental ability, cognitive styles, psychomotor abilities and affective involvement. These needs have implications to specifying operational objectives in terms of skills, knowledge and behavioural changes, choice of instructional tasks, specifying performance levels, allocation of appropriate resources - human and finance etc and eventual valuative procedures. The reward system must be clearer as to what the target population (rural women) will be able to get out from the educational activity. These include - prestige, recognition status, income and power etc.

All these issues presupposes various education reforms and the establishment of appropriate educational policies and strategic priorities, as well as research-evaluation agenda for measurement improvement and or modification of the educational system to become compatible with human development claims in the 21st century.

National education policies and aims of Education targeted to rural women will first and foremost take into account of the overall national education policies and the general aims of education - formal and non-formal. In each country efforts are directed at:

- What is the government"s policy in the development of education in the country? This could include policies of universalization of Education i.e. basic education for all; ability to equip the majority of the population with necessary occupational, technical and managerial skills, and knowledge for effective participation in national development programmes that foster cultural values, scientific thinking, problems-solving, improved productivity etc.

- In pursuance of these national education policies, a nation ensures that citizens do attain specific objectives of mastering the national language, 3Rs, understanding of national cultures, traditions, civic-social responsibilities, and social environmental etc.

Thus, educational activities, for rural women, will naturally be affected by the overall national education policies and the overall education aims. Eventually education for rural women, in great measure, should reflect the concrete realities and needs of women in development.

Thus, educational policies and priorities for rural women should be focussed on equal access and opportunities in national development. These should include:

- Policies that aim at integrating women in development in agriculture should be directed to women in rights to land acquisition and registration of titles, access to credit schemes and other economic resources without limitations of collateral, and intensification of education for extension workers for outreach education targeted to rural women.

- Access to and equal opportunities in technical education should be a policy priority for girls/women in formal and non-formal education. Thus appropriate technical training for women farmers should be intensified and underta.ken on a continuous basis (use of RTC etc).

- Reform in educational materials be intensified to remove gender bias and stereotyped examples that entrench gender discrimination.

- Change agents, public media etc, should be made to play a meaningful role in conscientisation and education of the public in general.

- Policies of Basic education for all, should increase the participation of women in functional literacy programme, especially in technical and vocational skills and open employment opportunities in non-traditional areas.

- In terms of increased productivity, educational policies should greatly aim at improving the quality of health services and facilities, to ensure that women are physically and mentally fit at all times.

- Policies on information dissemination should ensure that rural women get the right information, from the right (trusted) channels and should be timely.

- Political education for conscientisation, and subsequent promotion of equal participation of women, in civic, political and partnership in education and development decision-making should become a reality of daily life.

- Education and women and the law requires policies that enshrine legal rights education which in turn requires reforms in discriminatory laws against women.

The list is not exhaustive. These examples of educational policies and priorities serve as guide to see how problems facing WID can be resolved.

In terms of research agenda and evaluation we need to ask ourselves, as educators, planners etc whether:

- How we can integrate WID on what assumptions-rationale and the evolving strategies!

- What would be the short and long-term impact of WID on women themselves, on their families in their culture!

- On what criteria can we evaluate WID!

. To what extent and manner are women involved in identification, planning and implementing projects/programmes? What constraints are faced?

. Finally how can we measure women's participation in development etc; and

. What categories of educational situations are appropriate to WID strategies e.g. independent study, learning group, cooperative group, institutions, associations and organization etc.

To conclude; educational policies and priorities for rural women are a major human rights concern in all parts of the world, and especially in Southern Africa where centuries of racism, apartheid and colonialism alike, as well as the aftermath of civil wars, crude education have left the women displaced, marginalized and crippled - socially and economically. Thus functional literacy and development for women is emphasized as part and parcel of life-long education. To sum it all, UNESCO (1985) on observing the decade for women 1976-85, emphasized literacy for women as a development priority. Facts and compelling reasons for making women literate are:

- The inferior position assigned to women jeopardizes not only their future status in society but also the future of society itself.

- Women, who represent half of the world's population, do two thirds of the work but receive only one-tenth of the total income.
- Rural women, who produce at least 50 per cent of food production, receive no agricultural training of any kind.

- Their working day is always longer than that of men - from 15 to 19 hours a day. In addition to looking after the children, they do the housework, fetch wood, carry water, prepare meals and perform the long and tiring tasks of hoeing, planting out and bringing in the harvest.

- In most regions of the world maternal mortality rates are still high: women suffer from chronic malnutrition, and two-thirds of them are anaemic. Without any kind of sex education, their health is undermined by frequent unspaced pregnancies.

- Opposition to a more balanced diet, to family planning, to hygiene in the home , and to other ways of improving family health and the quality of life, is closely bound up with illiteracy.

Compelling reasons for making women literate:

Literacy enables women:

- help to improve their family's health and diet;
- increase their production and earnings, hence raise their children's and family's standard of living;

- gain access to learning appropriate technologies, to the management of co-operatives and to the use of loan facilities;

and on the other:

- improve their own social and cultural status;

- discharge their responsibilities more effectively, particularly the growing number of women who now become heads of families;

If women and girls are to participate in literacy programmes it will be necessary to:

- combat social and cultural prejudice with regard to the education of women,

- explain the importance of educating women, both to women themselves and to the community as a whole, and gain the community support for it;

- give women the free time required;

- give them less hard working conditions;

- through appropriate functional literacy programmes, provide them with training that will help them to increase their incomes and meet their basic needs, and enable them to participate actively and fully in the cultural life of the community.

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